**Evaluate – Prioritize What Matters Most**

**Stepping Stone Summary Sheet**

New ministries and experiments lead to new forms of missional life and the need to evaluate what matters most among competing priorities. Leaders utilize the congregation/small group’s growing capacity to engage in meaningful conversation to discuss how structure, individual gifts, ministries, and activities can be oriented around a deepening understanding of Christ’s mission.

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<th>Initial Questions – As the congregation moves deeper into the missional practices and activities, prophetic imagination will lead to different experiments. Depending on the size of the congregation and number of individuals involved the experiments will begin to stretch the resource capacity of the congregation. In addition, new ways of being together and living Christ’s mission are evolving. This will naturally lead to discussions about what matters most in light of competing priorities and an emerging vision for how the congregation can move into the future together.</th>
<th>Initial Path Forward - This is about continuing to create safe and welcoming space for individuals to share their stories and perspectives. Continue to build on positive energy. Focus on what we are trying to create in contrast to “what needs fixing” approach. Richard Foster in <em>Freedom of Simplicity</em> suggests it is easy to say no when there is a deeper yes burning within. The question at this point in the journey is: “What deeper yes is burning within that is calling the congregation into the future?”</th>
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<td>- How are we doing as a leadership team? Are we feeling tired, energized? What adjustments do we need to make so the burden and challenges of leadership are more equally shared?</td>
<td>- Review and Implement “Facilitating Periodic Feedback Meetings”</td>
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<td>- How do we continue to encounter God in times of our sharing together? Are we creating the space necessary to let the Spirit lead?</td>
<td>- Review “How Mission Can Shape Congregational Form and Structure”</td>
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<td>- How do we continue to keep our focus on core missional practices while engaging in new experiments? Do we need to introduce a new missional practice or discontinue an existing one that may not be as effective as hoped?</td>
<td>- Review “Connecting the Dots of Missional Practices, Experiences, Questions, and Insights”</td>
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<td>- Have we reached a plateau? Do we feel a pause in momentum that may signal a need to step back and be in conversation with the congregation on how things are going? (A plateau may be a signal the congregation is not ready for evaluation</td>
<td>- Review ”Facilitating Conversation During Evaluation”</td>
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*Note: There is more detailed information on each activity suggestion in the LCM Field Guide Overview on page 33.*
but needs to spend more time with the four stepping-stones of Encounter, Discover, Envision, and Experiment)

- What is our best sense of how the congregation is responding to new understandings and engaging in experiments? Is the timing right to enter into a conversation about what we take with us into the future and what we need to leave behind?

- How do we best facilitate a conversation around missional priorities that draws on the positive energy and experiences of the process while making difficult decisions about what is sustainable going into the future?

- How do we engage the perspectives of all ages?

**Milestones**

It is important for the Pastor Leadership Team to understand when it is time to have a conversation with the congregation about the future. This is a conversation that most often does not occur in congregations. As a result, people often get tired and become disengaged.

The key is to be proactive in the conversation but not too early. The congregation needs to be in the Discover, Envision, and Experiment mode for a while to discover the unique challenges with sustaining this type of congregational experience. Here are some indicators that the timing may be right:

- People (a core group of about 20-25%) are beginning to internalize the LCM process in their personal discipleship. They are fully engaged in the core missional practices, connected with an experiment, and sharing insights out of their experiences with the process.

- The congregational decision making is increasingly informed by this process. More specifically, deeper and new understandings about living Christ's mission as community are informing the congregation's decisions.

- Although there is positive energy by the congregation as a whole, there is anecdotal evidence that some of the core group are asking questions about sustainability. This often occurs when exciting new things are happening while the existing structure and programs of the congregation are still continuing.

- Members of the congregation are inviting new people to come and see what is happening. This is a strong indicator that the congregation has discovered a new way
of being that is beginning to take root. People are excited and they want to invite others to join in.

- Everyone has opportunity to express his or her gifts in mission. It important to recognize that mission is broadly defined as the five Mission Initiatives. Whether a person connects through engagement in missional practices, sharing as a prayer partner for someone engaged in an experiment, or on the front lines of a new expression of ministry, they have found a place to connect and contribute.